GENDER AND SPACE IN AMERICAN PUBLIC LIBRARIES, 1880-1920

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Abstract

The built environment plays an important part in reinforcing and reproducing gender roles. Public libraries built in the United States in the early 20th century with funds provided by Andrew Carnegie offer an important opportunity to assess the relationship between architecture and gender ideology, particularly as it affected the work-lives of the first generation of female librarians. Contemporary debates about efficient library planning masked a campaign by male librarians to use the material world to create a professional hierarchy dominated by men. While large city libraries continued to provide their male administrators with private offices and the other physical trappings of professional status, small public libraries were reinvented architecturally just as women were entrusted with their administration. Designed as a single space with the librarian's work station at the center, this new library type denied the female librarian the spatial control enjoyed by her male counterparts, while the delivery desk of the period cast the female librarian in the role of a mindless operative by structuring her work into a series of repetitive tasks that were measured quantitatively, rather than qualitatively. These physical constraints on female librarians, however, were not absolute. Female librarians advocated the use of self-contained children's room in part to circumvent the limitations built into their work environment.

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The built environment plays an important part in reinforcing and reproducing gender roles. Houses, farms, public buildings, city streets, all are shaped either implicitly or explicitly to enable users to behave in ways deemed appropriate to their sex, as well as to their race, class, age and other defining characteristics. Since they can express ingrained cultural attitudes that are unarticulated in written texts, buildings serve as important tools for examining the links between gender ideology and daily practice. Indeed, the built environment offers crucial evidence for the investigation of the relationship between individual actions and the cultural contexts in which those lives were lived.

Recent attempts to uncover the role of women in shaping the built environment of the United States have tended to follow one of two tracks. One has been to maintain the field's traditional focus on the architectural profession, while restoring forgotten names of female architects to the historical record.[1] Given the profession's hostility to women, however, this approach touches on the lives of only a handful of women. By the same token, it reinforces the entrenched opinion that women played only a minimal role in the history of architecture.

The second track draws on the findings of recent scholarship in women's history, investigating ways in which the form of American housing has communicated, shaped and reproduced the ideology of separate spheres.[2] While this second approach has challenged us to understand the relationship between ideas about gender and their expression in built form, it has focused almost exclusively on middle-class culture of the

Victorian era and has tended to interpret the built environment of the 19th century as a spatial equivalent of the cultural ideal of separate spheres. Even when looking beyond the lives of the Victorian middle class, studies of women in the domestic sphere have implicitly reinforced a limited understanding of American womanhood.[3]

This study of public libraries built in the first decades of the 20th century addresses the deficiencies of these earlier approaches. Most important, it moves beyond a consideration of the designer's role and asks questions aimed at understanding the building's impact on the user. As a result it demonstrates the extent to which gender ideology has shaped public space, even when assumptions about gender were not directly articulated by the architects involved. Indeed, this study reveals that the drive for efficient library design in the early 20th century is inseparable from a highly-charged struggle over gender roles. Like many work environments that women entered around the turn of the century, the modern library was structured to limit the power of female workers, even as it exploited their labor.

Background: The Carnegie Library Program

In the last years of the 19th century, American public libraries were fundamentally reshaped by the philanthropic activities of industrialist Andrew Carnegie. After a ten-year period of financing a handful of expensive and elaborate library buildings (in what he characterized as the "retail" phase of his library philanthropy), Carnegie launched a program of "wholesale" library giving that lasted from 1899 to 1917 and which ultimately resulted in the erection of over 1600 public library buildings in the

United States.[4] At the same time, he began to reform the practice of cultural philanthropy, adopting the modern corporation as his model of bureaucratic efficiency, and requiring the active public support of the libraries erected with his funds. In order to encourage a similar level of efficiency within the library itself, the Carnegie program sought to influence the form that the modern library would take, gradually increasing pressure on recipient towns to conform. Initially, this pressure took the form of a reduction in the dollar amount of individual gifts. By 1911, however, the design advice that James Bertram (Carnegie's personal secretary) had been doling out on a case-by-case basis was codified into a set of six ideal schematic plans, published in a pamphlet entitled, "Notes on the Erection of Library Bildings [sic]."[5] Despite variations to accommodate differences of size and site, all six plans were arranged to allow a single librarian to oversee the entire library.

To the extent that Carnegie libraries have received scholarly attention, they have often been interpreted as an unalloyed boon for librarianship. After all, in the late 19th century, library buildings held great practical and symbolic importance for this struggling profession. A heated debate had developed between librarians and architects, with both groups claiming library design as one of their areas of particular professional expertise. Stepping into the middle of this debate, Carnegie delighted the library world by turning to librarians for advice. Conferences with library leaders like Cleveland's William Brett familiarized Carnegie and Bertram with the librarian's point of view. When the Carnegie program advocated a model of library design, the librarian was a central figure, whose

presence at the charging desk determined the layout of the entire building. An efficient cog perfectly meshed into the smooth workings of the library machine, Carnegie's ideal librarian was simply indispensable.

The reality, however, was somewhat more complex. The actual people who staffed real Carnegie libraries were more human, amalgams of ambition, jealousy, prejudice, altruism and other human attributes that complicated their interaction with readers and with the efficient library setting. To complicate matters further, the profession itself was in a state of flux. Beginning in the 1880s and 1890s, a new emphasis on public service, the establishment of library schools, and an influx of women into the profession had transformed the face of American librarianship. Although these library trends predated the wholesale phase of Carnegie's library philanthropy, the library buildings erected with Carnegie money were informed by these changes in librarianship, and in turn formed the stage upon which librarians, particularly female librarians, experimented with their new roles.

Engendering American Librarianship

For those who staffed American libraries in the early 20th century, the issue of professionalization remained an important one. Like their middle-class counterparts in architecture, librarians were still in the process of negotiating their claim to professional status with American society at large. Indeed, many of the changes in librarianship that began in the 1880s can be interpreted as strategies for establishing this special status. Beginning at Columbia College in 1887, schools of library science offered institutional

recognition to the claim that librarianship required specialized knowledge and training. The new emphasis on public service that comprised the "modern library idea" was equally a part of this strategy, calculated to secure the good will of the general public and to convince them of the librarian's social usefulness. Likewise, the language of librarianship was increasingly reinvigorated from the 1880s on, in order to dispel the image of bookish passivity that had precluded librarianship from the ranks of the more worldly "true" professions of law and medicine.

This new language of librarianship drew its rhetorical power from the sharpness of the contrast between the old librarian and the new. Characterized almost universally as the custodian of books, the old-style librarian was presented as physically diminished, passive, and all but emasculated. Typical is an article from the Library Journal, in which an anonymous writer explained that "the older custodian has done his work, and is everywhere retiring to private life," thus associating traditional librarianship with advanced age and physical decay. The same article cast the old-style librarian in the role of "a referee in finding the right sources of knowledge," neatly placing him on the sidelines of the active life.[6] An outspoken critic of old-style librarianship, Melvil Dewey added to the list of unflattering comparisons, likening the old type of librarian to "a crabbed and unsympathetic old fossil." Described by Dewey as "an arsenal in time of peace," the old type of a library was the saddest of relics, a military installation excluded from battle.[7]

In contrast, the new librarianship was associated with vigor and action, and depended on traits that the 19th century attributed to masculinity. Writers emphasized the breadth of vision required of the new librarian, "the power of taking a large, impersonal view of things."[8] Equally important, the new librarian needed to possess originality, a knowledge of the world of affairs, a head for business, a willingness to court responsibility, a readiness to experiment, and the ability to exercise authority over others. Paralleling exactly the qualifications that the 19th century had required for successful businessmen, this list of traits suggests an attempt on the part of librarians to create new links between culture and commerce. Recast as an activity requiring conventionally male qualities, the new librarianship was reinvigorated in an attempt to emphasize its legitimate place in the masculine sphere, and to secure its rightful place in the constellation of professions.

In describing modern librarianship, Dewey favored military analogies. In contrast to the old library's impotent arsenal, the new library was for him "an army in the field with all guns limbered."[9] By extension, he claimed that

> the great librarian . . must have a head as clear as the master in diplomacy; a hand as strong as he who quells the raging mob or leads great armies onto victory; and a heart as great as he who, to save others, will, if need be, lay down his life.

Going on to explain that "most of the men who will achieve this greatness will be women," Dewey used exaggerated masculine imagery in part to highlight his support of

women in the profession.[10] At the same time, this imagery belongs to a wide variety of cultural manifestations that Jackson Lears has associated with turn-of-the-century antimodernism. The emphasis on physical activity parallels the new fervor for the strenuous life that fed the emergence of organized athletics. Dewey's military analogies parallel the martial ideal and the worship of force that developed in the late 19th century as an antidote to the banal routine of a rationalized culture. Likewise, his admiration for the willingness to risk one's very life in the service of others smacks of the intensity of experience favored at the turn of the century as the path to authentic selfhood. The modern library idea then was more than just an attempt to bring books to the people; like other attacks on the feminization of American culture, the modern library idea sought to reinvest librarianship itself with manly vigor.[11]

In the same years that librarianship was being recast along aggressively masculine lines, women were entering the profession in increasing numbers. At the time, American library leaders wrote articles in the professional and popular press detailing the changing face of librarianship, while their British counterparts commented on this peculiarly American phenomenon; in contrast to their own situation, Britain's library leaders were astounded at the large number of women who attended A.L.A. meetings, sometimes even outnumbering men. Historical records bear out these contemporary impressions, showing that two-thirds of library workers in 1878 were women, while that figure had climbed to 78.5% by 1910.[12]

The abruptness of the shift is attributable in part to what librarianship offered to the women involved. Like the club women who founded subscription libraries in the late 19th century, many women were drawn to librarianship by what they perceived as their natural aptitude for disseminating culture. Indeed, many women made the transition from volunteer library work to professional librarianship within the same institution. That women would follow this path was recognized at the time; indeed, a summer course in library science at the New York State Library School in Albany, New York, was aimed specifically at librarians "who desire to prepare themselves for better work in their present positions."[13] By this time, women's colleges had begun to offer female students a full liberal arts curriculum on a par with that of men's colleges, and by the turn of the century, women's educational opportunities had far outstripped their employment possibilities.[14] Professional librarianship (with its new emphasis on public service) was increasingly attractive as a means of combatting the sense of uselessness that plagued the first generation of college-educated women. The impulse to "share the race life" that prompted Jane Addams's establishment of Hull House served to push many of her contemporaries towards careers in library work.[15]

The official reaction to this influx of women was mixed. The most active proponent of women in the field was certainly Melvil Dewey, who recognized an able and growing pool of library workers in college-educated women, excluded from many other careers. In an address before the Association of Collegiate Alumnae in 1886, he noted the "dearth of trained librarians," and encouraged his audience to consider

librarianship as a career more pleasant than teaching and more effective than the ministry.[16] Dewey also revealed that he saw little conflict in the image of the library militant with a woman leading the charge. Beginning his address with the military analogies cited above, Dewey also described librarianship as an activity more closely related to domestic concerns. "The natural qualities most important in library work," Dewey assured his listeners, "are accuracy, order (or what we call the housekeeping instinct), executive ability, and above all earnestness and enthusiasm." What is more, Dewey de-emphasized the strenuousness of library work, explaining "that physically the library is less exacting than the shorter hours of the school," that "it avoids much of the nervous strain and the wear and tear of the class room," and that "there is hardly any occupation that is so free from annoying surroundings."[17] According to Dewey, then, librarianship was well suited to the conventionally-defined mental and physical abilities of women. As a recruiting talk for the new school of library science that Dewey was about to open at Columbia College in New York, the address seems to have been successful; seventeen of the twenty students in the school's inaugural class were women, a fact that infuriated Columbia's trustees and precipitated Dewey's suspension the next year, and the eventual installation of Dewey and his school at the New York State Library in Albany.[18]

Few other male library leaders accepted women into their ranks so happily, as the presence of women in their field would undercut their already dicey bid for professional recognition.[19] Circumstances, however, forced reluctant male librarians to reconsider

their position. The reinvigorated language of librarianship had not convinced library boards and tax-payers that librarians were entitled to remuneration comparable to that commanded by other professionals. As a result, the profession failed to attract men in sufficient numbers to meet the high demand for educated library workers created by the great increase in the number of public libraries that began independently of the Carnegie program in the 1880s.

Women also offered certain advantages that their brothers did not. As one librarian so bluntly put it in 1904, they "do not cost as much as men." Indeed, just as female teachers earned less than their male counterparts, the average annual salary for a male librarian in a small library was $2118 in 1904, while a woman received only $1429 for the same work.[20] The reasons for this inequality are all too familiar. Assuming that physical frailty, emotional instability, and a preference for marriage over career would make female job performance erratic and short-lived, employers valued women workers less highly than their male counterparts, rationalizing the practice of unequal pay as fairness to men, who often had greater financial responsibilities. Shut out of many other opportunities for respectable and useful work, women felt compelled to accept less. For libraries with tight budgets and a growing demand for books, it was an increasingly attractive partnership.

Active partners, however, were not equal partners, and by the early 20th century, library leaders had articulated a highly gendered library hierarchy. In the official version of librarianship, men would continue to dominate key executive and management

positions in the field, while women were encouraged to fill less prestigious and lower paid positions. John Cotton Dana, Newark's prominent librarian, was a longtime Dewey supporter and proponent of women in library work. Yet, in a 1911 exegesis on the subject, he spelled out with unselfconscious clarity that women could aspire to be "assistants" and "subordinates," but rarely more.

What is more, Dana articulated a number of sub-specialties within librarianship that he felt were particularly suited to female skills. Paralleling many contemporary justifications for using women as clerical workers, he emphasized women's particular suitedness to technical work--cataloging, classifying, index making, book repair--and work with children. In each case, intellectual ability was not a job requirement, and Dana even went to some pains to assure his readers that a woman need not be "distinctly bookish" to work in a library. Cataloging, for instance, he suggested for women who "have some skill with the pen, . . . write clearly, . . . are painstaking and accurate and can . . . follow exactly rules set for [their] guidance," while work at the lending desk was suited to those who "have an agreeable presence and know how to say 'no' as pleasantly as 'yes,' yet tend to be obliging rather than the opposite." Even Dana's description of reference work (arguably the most intellectually rigorous area of library activities) was stripped of its intellectual content when applied to women, reduced instead to the being able to "feel almost instinctively what a book, and especially an encyclopedia or any other work of reference, can tell you."[21]

Dana's presentation of library work for women was, of course, based upon conventional stereotypes of the ideal woman as pleasant, malleable, helpful, accurate, detail-oriented, naturally intuitive, but not too smart. By suggesting that women were innately suited for many aspects of the work, it was intended to welcome women into the field. In the context of librarianship's battle for professional recognition, it served other purposes as well. To the extent that these innate skills were defined as devoid of any intellectual spark, it helped to rationalize the lower pay offered to women in the field. Finally, by denying women the opportunity to exercise professional authority even over the reader, this definition of women in librarianship virtually guaranteed that most women would remain subordinate in the hierarchy of the library staff. For library leadership, which remained predominantly male, it was an ideal situation--a means of welcoming low-paid, but highly-skilled, workers, while reserving positions of power for themselves.

Engendering Library Design

Although Carnegie voiced no opinion on issues confronting American librarianship in the early 20th century, his library program nonetheless had an impact on the field. After all, his philanthropy exacerbated the conditions that supported the entry of women into librarianship. By funding a dramatic increase in the number of public libraries in the United States, the Carnegie program fed the great demand for qualified library staff. After 1908, the increasing emphasis on efficiency had its impact as well. An attempt on Bertram's part to eliminate elaborate architectural expression on the

exterior of Carnegie libraries had only mixed success. An unintended side effect was longer lasting; these smaller appropriations resulted in substantially smaller annual maintenance funds.[22] The $15,000 that was common in the years after 1904 meant that municipal governments were only required to provide the library with an annual budget of $1500, to cover the purchase of books and fuel, and the salaries of librarian, assistants and custodial staff. In these circumstances, there was ample incentive for library boards to hire lower paid females for library work.

Equally important, once Bertram espoused a specific planning ideal, he implicitly involved the Carnegie program in the on-going debate about the nature of American librarianship. Written with the advice of male library leaders, the various editions of the "Notes on the Erection of Library Bildings [sic]" can be read as the material expression of the official view of librarianship. In this context, Bertram's inattention to large urban libraries is significant; after all, in the large staffs of these libraries the gender-based library hierarchy was relatively easy to enforce, and easy to translate into spatial terms. In contrast, the small library represented in the "Notes" was the locus of great changes in librarianship. Not only was the hierarchy more compact in a small staff, but library leaders acknowledged that the librarian of the small library was more likely to be a woman. Thus, the emphasis in the "Notes" on the planning of the small library suggests that Bertram and his professional advisors were particularly concerned about defining the scope of activity for the new female librarian.

At first glance, the "Notes" themselves present a remarkably simple setting for the day-to-day activities of librarianship, with only two spaces within the library designated for the librarian's use. Of primary importance was the centrally-placed charging desk, around which the rest of the library was planned. Here, the librarian was expected to pass the greater part of the workday, overseeing the entire library from its central position. Also designated for the librarian's use was the multipurpose staff room, which did at least double-duty, serving the staff as a rest room and providing a venue for the messier aspects of the librarian's job. Its basement location isolated from public areas of the building insured that it remained of secondary importance in the librarian's workday. The simplicity of this arrangement, however, is deceptive. The close relationship between librarian and charging desk communicates a great deal about the nature of librarianship as Bertram and his advisors interpreted it. The term charging desk itself is significant. In the closed stack public library of the late 19th century, the point of initial contact between reader and book was the delivery desk, a long, straight, uninterrupted counter designed primarily to isolate the public from the library's treasures. Here, readers approached first to hand in their request slips, retreated while the page disappeared into the book storage area, and approached again a few minutes later to receive delivery of the books requested for home use. Like its 19th century counterpart, the 20th-century charging desk was also the place where readers charged out books for home use. Yet, the charging desk was no longer perceived as a barrier between the reader and the books; indeed, in the open stack library of the 20th century, readers

helped themselves to books directly from the shelf and (reversing 19th-century practice) presented the books to the librarian at the desk.

As the "Notes" suggest, this dramatic change in library philosophy had an impact on the form of the charging desk. Despite the fact that plans A, B, and D in the "Notes" continue to use the term "Delivery" to identify the book charging area, none of the six plans presented includes the long straight counter that had hampered public access to books in libraries built in the late 19th century. Instead, all the plans show the librarian's post as a smaller, compact desk, that might have slowed but never halted the movement of readers towards the book shelves. In plan B, the ends of the charging desk are canted back towards the interior of the library, actually encouraging and speeding up the encounter between the reader and the books.

Although the charging desks in the "Notes" are little more than schematic representations, their size, location, and shape (particularly in plan B) are consistent with the charging desks sold by the Library Bureau. Although the company offered charging desks as stock items at least as early as 1902, a later catalog devoted solely to charging desks argued that the location, shape, size and design of this crucial piece of library furniture needed to be custom fit to each library. Indeed, the desks depicted varied dramatically in size and shape. A tiny U-shaped desk at the Solvay (N.Y.) Public Library was designed for the use of a single librarian (Fig. 3). An octagonal desk at one of Cincinnati's branches and a V-shaped desk at the East Orange (N.J.) Public Library could each accommodate at least two library workers. By far the largest charging desks

depicted were those from Manhattan's branch libraries; these large square enclosures were the size of small rooms and could accommodate five library workers.

Despite the variety represented in this catalog, Library Bureau charging desks were all designed specifically to aid in the efficient conduct of library administration. To this end, all desks were designed to respond to the spaces in which they were situated. In all cases, this ensured that the desk occupied the least amount of floor space necessary to fulfill the functions of charging and discharging books. In Cincinnati, the octagonal desk further contributed to the efficient administration of the library by allowing the librarian an uninterrupted view into the radial stacks behind the desk. In New York's branches, the large square enclosure created narrow passages that helped librarians control the movement of readers and books; whether entering or exiting reading and book storage areas, library patrons moved in single file along a one-way passage directly adjacent to the desk.

The concern with maximum book-handling efficiency was equally evident in the smallest details of the Library Bureau charging desk. Indeed, the interior of each charging desk contained drawers and cupboards, specially shaped to accommodate a full battery of library devices (also marketed by the Library Bureau), and thoughtfully arranged to keep these devices within easy reach of the staff member or members seated at the desk. Even a desk as small as the one at the Solvay Public Library included a pull-out desk surface, a card catalog on a swivel base (for the use of librarian and patrons), a charging tray (for the storage of book cards), a card-sorting drawer (divided

into nine compartments), and another drawer for an alphabetic list of borrowers (Fig. 3). Date stamp, rubber bands, paper-clips-- every piece of equipment had its place at the charging desk. Serving to ward off dust and to hide the clutter of cards, roller covers gave the desk an unencumbered surface that the turn of the century associated with efficiency.

With their emphasis on careful design to enhance library efficiency, such charging desks were predicated on ideals shared by Carnegie, and it is hardly surprising that the Carnegie program advocated their use. Indeed, as the centrally-placed control center for library administration, the charging desk was the heart of the Carnegie library plan. Without it, the library was incomplete. With it, the library was transformed into an efficient machine for the distribution of books.

Playing on this factory analogy, library literature at the time often compared the centrally-located librarian to the manager of a factory. Indeed, library leaders themselves preferred this analogy, since it seemed more closely aligned with their professional aspirations. Yet, the ideal physical environment planned for the female librarian suggested something less prestigious. Unlike the factory manager who supervised his workers from an elevated position, the librarian sat among her charges; if she could supervise their activities, they could just as easily subject her to comparable scrutiny. At the Hudson Park Branch of the New York Public Library, a librarian combined metaphors from both natural and man-made disasters to describe her sense of exposure at the desk during the after-school rush. At three o'clock, she explained,

> the storm broke. There was what might be called a 'preliminary warning.' It was the sound of many feet pressing swiftly on from every direction and growing each instant nearer, then the big double doors swung open and an army of children marched in.

Far removed from the pleasant atmosphere described in the library recruitment literature of the day, such an experience transformed the charging desk in the librarian's eyes. No longer a command post where the librarian reigned with the calm composure of a modern manager who knows that her equipment will work with smooth efficiency, the charging desk was now a defensive fortress protecting the librarian in the losing battle against a hostile attack. Unable to maintain authority in ways anticipated by philanthropist and architect, the hapless staff of the Hudson Park Branch enlisted police aid; an officer stationed at the door all afternoon "kept the children in a sort of doubled-up line and only admitted one when we sent one out."[23]

The gap between official vision of librarianship and its practice was the result of the gap between the "typical" reader assumed in theory and the actual readers served in large urban branches in immigrant neighborhoods. Dependent upon the visual supervision of a centrally-placed, female librarian to maintain a pleasant, home-like atmosphere in the library, the official view of librarianship also depended on library users who knew already the behavior expected of them in the library setting. It assumed that the "normal" home was a quiet, genteel setting segregated from the world of work, and that a sad look from mother would trigger internalized guilt and restore good

behavior. In short, it assumed readers raised according to standards outlined in the prescriptive literature of Victorian homelife, and accepted as universal truths values that were culturally specific to the Anglo-American middle class of the late 19th century. As the Hudson Park experience demonstrates, the theory simply broke down when confronted with readers who did not share these cultural values.

Indeed, the librarian in a small Carnegie library was less like a manager than she was like other pink-collar workers. Although the language of the "Notes" remains gender-neutral, the charging desk was remarkably like the workstations of other jobs increasingly assigned to female workers at the turn of the century. Whether a telephone operator, a typist, a file clerk, or a housewife struggling to attack her household chores with the scientific rigor advocated by home economists, the middle-class working woman found herself working in a seated position, at a work station shaped to minimize necessary movement. (At the Washington Park branch library in St. Joseph, Missouri, a horizontal radiator set within the knee-hole of the charging desk served as a warming footrest, offering added incentive to stay put.) Surrounded by technologically advanced tools that defined and structured work into a series of a repetitive tasks, the librarian was unable to complete the assigned tasks of the job without specialized tools. Finally, like other pink-collar workers, the librarian's job success was measured quantitatively, in the number of cards filed, in the number of calls put through, in the number of dishes washed.

Although such feminized tasks were often described with such elevated titles as file executive, household engineer, or professional librarian, the physical settings in which these tasks were carried out were substantially different from the workspaces of male professionals. By the end of the 19th century, professional men used control over their work space as one of the symbols of their authority, symbols that were carefully orchestrated to intimidate laymen, making them more receptive to expert advice. Having made an appointment to see a doctor or a lawyer, even the most prompt of clients was shown into an outer office. Left there to wait, the client had time to peruse the impressive framed certificates hanging on the walls or even to peer at the spines of the leather-bound textbooks on the shelf.[24] As if these signs of erudition were not enough to inspire the client's awe, the practitioner also maintained control over the timing of the consultation, either by entering the room himself, or by having a receptionist usher the client into his room. Working to gain their own professional recognition, 19th-century librarians had used similar ploys. Even the head librarian of the Allegheny City library in Pennsylvania (the first American library built with Carnegie funds) had a private office and the spatial control that was a sign of his professionalism.

In contrast, women in predominantly female occupations had no such control of their work spaces. Whether seated in tight rows in the Typewriter Operators' Department of the Larkin Company Building, or at a long bank of switchboards at the local telephone exchange, their work environment was completely controlled by others, with their work equipment bolted in place, and they themselves under constant scrutiny

of a male supervisor.[25] Instead of having offices of their own, women in female occupations often had jobs that centered on reinforcing the spatial barriers that underlined and enhanced the professional prestige of men who actually wielded authority and enjoyed professional status.

Conclusion

In general terms, the goal of this paper has been to demonstrate that ideas about gender roles have affected the design of the public realm, as well as the design of the domestic sphere. Specifically, we have seen that Andrew Carnegie's financial support allowed the leaders of American librarianship to use library planning in their campaign to reinforce a professional hierarchy dominated by men.

At the same time, the paper is not intended to promote a determinist interpretation of the built environment. Physical constraints on female librarians were certainly built into the library, but those constraints were not absolute. Dewey and others had adopted a militaristic rhetoric to imply that librarianship was an aggressive, militant occupation naturally suited to men, an occupation in which passive hand-maidens played only supporting roles. The women who actually answered the call, however, did not interpret this rhetoric as gender-specific. Instead of interpreting the militaristic imagery of librarianship as a rationale for gender-based barriers to professional advancement, female librarians embraced the ethos of aggressive librarianship as their own creed. Taking up a weapon originally forged against them, female librarians used it to move the library and librarianship in new directions.

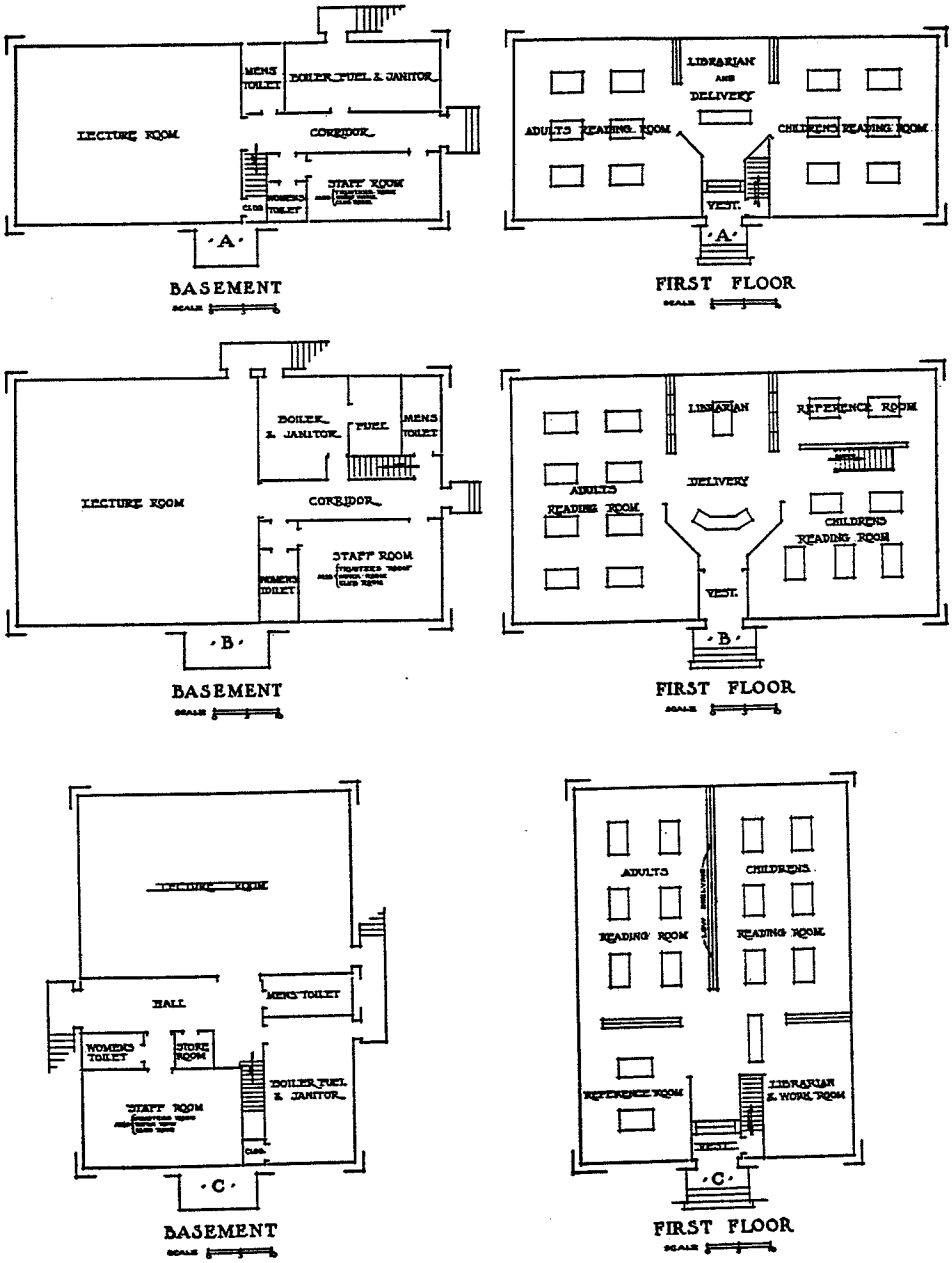
Like the club women who had organized libraries in the late 19th century, librarians of 1915 accepted the idea that librarianship drew on what they assumed were their innate mothering skills. Yet, supported by progressive educational theory, female librarians redefined this traditional role as a professional sub-specialty, children's librarianship. Like their male colleagues, they also used the material world to support their professional position. Taking an active role in shaping the interior arrangements of the libraries in which they worked, female librarians were early advocates of children's rooms in libraries. Separate from adult reading rooms and furnished with small-scale furniture, children's rooms were celebrated in official progressive rhetoric as places where younger readers could be themselves. In the context of gender-based arguments about professional space, they also emerge as places where the female librarian circumvented some of the limitations that her male colleagues sought to impose.

Figures

1. James Bertram, "Notes on the Erection of Library Bildings [sic]," 1911, schematic plans A, B, and C (Carnegie Corporation Records, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University).

2. James Bertram, "Notes on the Erection of Library Bildings [sic]," 1911, schematic plans D, E, and F (Carnegie Corporation Records, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University).

3. Library Bureau, Charging Desk, Solvay, New York, Public Library, c. 1903 (Charging Desks: A Description of Representative Types, Boston, n.d., 22).


MENS TOILET
BOILER, FUEL & JANITOR
LECTURE ROOM
CORRIDOR
STAFF ROOM
WOMENS TOILET
CLOS
·A·
BASEMENT
LIBRARIAN AND DELIVERY
ADULTS READING ROOM
CHILDRENS READING ROOM
VEST.
·A·
FIRST FLOOR
BOILER & JANITOR
FUEL
MENS TOILET
LECTURE ROOM
CORRIDOR
STAFF ROOM
WOMENS TOILET
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BASEMENT
LIBRARIAN
REFERENCE ROOM
ADULTS READING ROOM
DELIVERY
CHILDRENS READING ROOM
VEST.
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FIRST FLOOR
LECTURE ROOM
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WOMENS TOILET
STORE ROOM
STAFF ROOM
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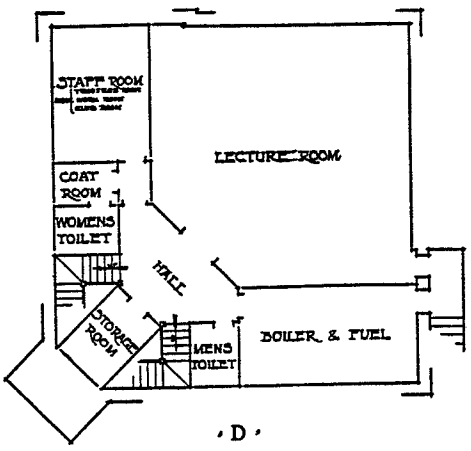
ADULTS READING ROOM
CHILDRENS READING ROOM
LIBRARIAN & WORK ROOM
REFERENCE ROOM
VEST.
·C·
FIRST FLOOR

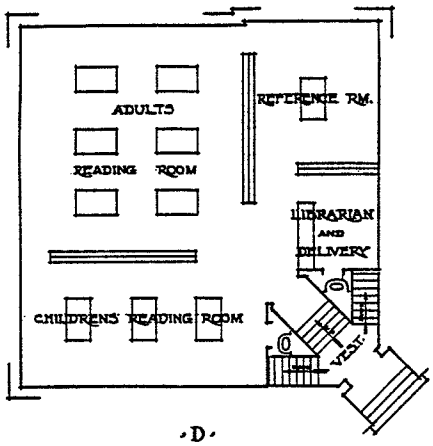
Figure 1



·D·

BASEMENT

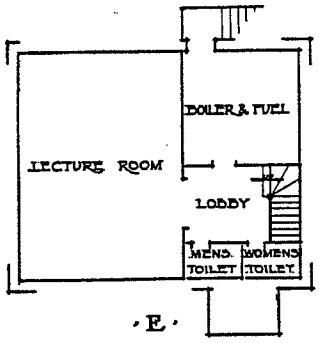
SCALE



·D·

FIRST FLOOR

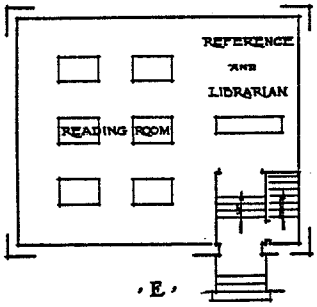
SCALE



·E·

BASEMENT

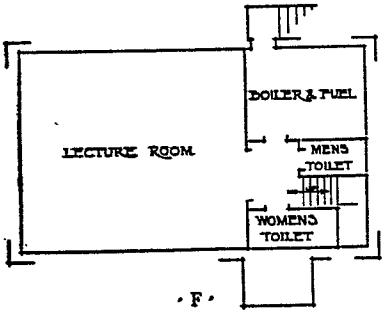
SCALE



·E·

FIRST FLOOR

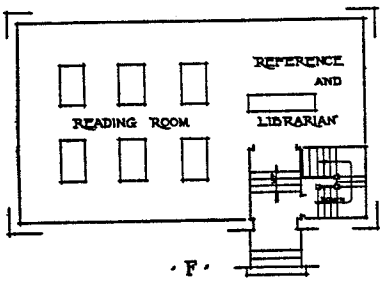
SCALE



·F·

BASEMENT

SCALE



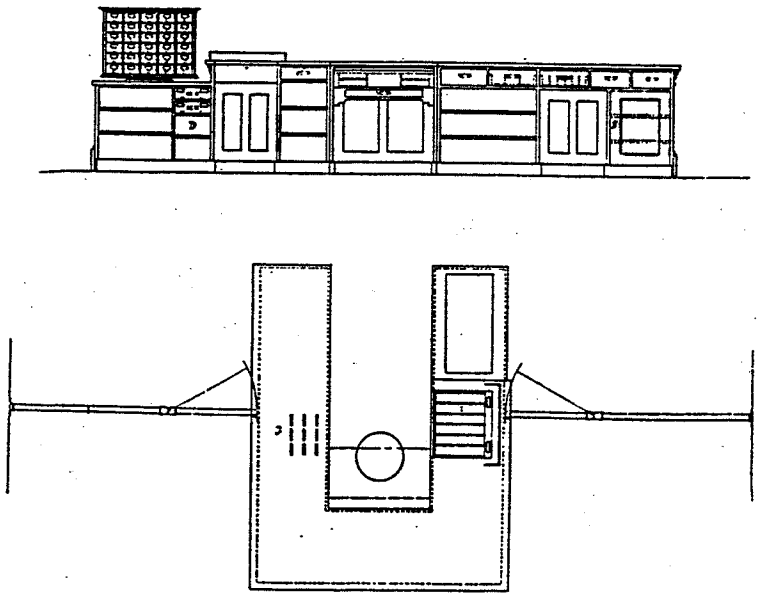
·F·

FIRST FLOOR

SCALE

NOTE: Elevations of plans submitted for approval should clearly sho the floor and ceiling lines of basement and main floor, and the natural and artificial grade lines. Floor plans should sho, clearly designated, all roof supports and similar obstructions of the accommodation.

Figure 2



Plan and rear elevation of Solvay Public Library charging desk

Figure 3

NOTES

1. These studies began to appear in the 1970s, with Doris Cole's From Tipi To Skyscraper: A History of Women in Architecture (Boston, 1973) and Women in American Architecture: A Historic and Contemporary Perspective (New York, 1977), edited by Susana Torre. Several monographs have appeared since 1980, including Virginia Grattan's Mary Colter: Builder Upon the Red Earth (Flagstaff, AZ, 1980), Eleanor Raymond, Architect (London, 1981), also by Doris Cole, and Sara Holmes Boutelle's Julia Morgan, Architect (New York, 1988).

2. These studies began to appear somewhat later and include Gwendolyn Wright's Moralism and the Model Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago, 1873-1913 (Chicago and London, 1980), and Dolores Hayden's The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities (Cambridge, MA, and London, England, 1981).

3. Two fine recent studies that consider housing for groups other than the urban or suburban middle class are Lizabeth A. Cohen's article, "Embellishing a Life of Labor: An Interpretation of the Material Culture of American Working-Class Homes, 1885-1915," Journal of American Culture, 3 (Winter 1980), 752-775, and Sally McMurry's book, Families and Farmhouses in 19th-Century America (New York and Oxford, 1988).

4. Although the majority of Carnegie libraries were built in the United States, the philanthropist also built library buildings in most parts of the English-speaking world, including Scotland, England, Canada, Australia, and South Africa. For a complete listing, see Florence Anderson, Carnegie Corporation Library Program, 1911-1961 (New York, 1963).

5. What at first glance seem to be misspellings are evidence of Carnegie's support of Melvil Dewey's Simplified Spelling scheme for rationalizing the spelling of the English language.

6. "The New Librarians," Library Journal, 15:11 (November 1890), 338.

7. Melvil Dewey, Librarianship as a Profession for College-Bred Women: An Address Delivered Before the Association of Collegiate Alumnae (Boston, Library Bureau, 1886), p. 11.

8. "The New Librarians," 338; Salome Cutler Fairchild, "Women in American Libraries," Library Journal, 29: 12 (December 1904), 161.

9. Dewey, Librarianship for College-Bred Women, p. 11.

10. Melvil Dewey, "The Ideal Librarian," Library Journal, 24:1 (January 1899), 14.

11. Jackson Lears, No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920 (New York, 1981), pp. 89-139.

12. For recent scholarly assessment of this demographic change, see Dee Garrison, Apostles of Culture: The Public Librarian and American Society, 1876-1920 (New York, 1979), pp. 173-241. For contemporary commentary, see Dewey, Librarianship for College-Bred Women; M. S. R. James, "Women Librarians," Library Journal, 18:5 (May 1893), 146-148; Celia A. Hayward, "Woman as Cataloguer," Public Libraries, 3:4 (April 1898), 121-123; Fairchild, "Women in American Libraries," 157-162; John Cotton Dana, "Women in Library Work," Independent, 71:3270 (August 3, 1911), 244-250.

13. New York State Library School, Circular of Information, 1912-13 (Albany: State of New York Education Department, 1912), p. 29.

14. The first institution to offer a liberal arts curriculum to women was Vassar in 1865. Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, Alma Mater: Design and Experience in the Women's Colleges from Their Nineteenth-Century Beginnings to the 1930s (New York, 1984), pp. 28-29.

15. Allen F. Davis, Spearheads for Reform: The Social Settlements and the Progressive Movement, 1890-1914 (New Brunswick, NJ, 1984), pp. 36-37.

16. Dewey, Librarianship for College-Bred Women, 15, 23-24.

17. Dewey, Librarianship for College-Bred Women, 23.

18. Garrison, Apostles of Culture, pp. 130-135.

19. The link between sex discrimination and an uncertain professional status has been made explicitly for other fields in these same years. For architecture, see Elizabeth G. Grossman and Lisa B. Reitzes, "Caught in the Crossfire: Women and Architectural Education, 1880-1910," in Architecture: A Place for Women, ed. Ellen Perry Berkeley (Washington and London, 1989), 27-40.

20. Fairchild, "Women in American Libraries," 161.

21. Dana, "Women in Library Work," 245-246.

22. Recipient towns were required to maintain a tax-supported annual maintenance fund equivalent to 10% of the Carnegie gift. The reduction in the size of Carnegie gifts after 1904 meant a substantial decrease in the size of the required maintenance fund.

23. Mary Denson Pretlow, "The Opening of a Public Library," Charities and the Commons, 15 (March 17, 1906), 889.

24. For non-spatial symbols of professional authority, see Burton J. Bledstein, The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America (New

York, 1976), 98-99.

25. For a period photograph of the work environments of the Larkin Company's female clerical workers, see Jack Quinan's Frank Lloyd Wright's Larkin Building, Myth and Fact (New York: 1987), figures 41-43 and 45. See also, Olivier Zunz, Making America Corporate, 1870-1920 (Chicago and London, 1990), figures 9-12.